

Inspired Facilities



Sleaford Leisure Centre

CASE STUDY THEMES

- Remodelling
- Modernisation
- Sustainable energy
- Community pride and engagement
- Increased throughput
- New clubs developed

PROJECT SUMMARY

Summary

Extensive refurbishment to address maintenance issues, falling visitor numbers and declining user satisfaction. The project also supported works to improve accessibility for users of the facility.

Facility name	Sleaford Leisure Centre
Lead organisation	North Kesteven District Council
Organisation type	District Council
Location	Sleaford, Lincolnshire
Sport	Multi-sport: Swimming, Dance, Exercise & Fitness
Total project cost	£3.05 million
Inspired facilities funding	£150,000 (5% of total)
Other funding sources	NKDC (£2,650,000), Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant (£140,000), ASA (£83,000) and artsNK (£20,000).
Tender process	Tender
Contract type	SCAPE Framework
Start and end date	October 2012 - October 2013
Duration of capital works	12 months

Achieved outcomes

- Overall throughput up 62% and overall satisfaction almost doubled to 98% 12 months after opening
- Sustainable heating system, providing free heat and hot water for 25 years
- Modernisation has created a strong sense of pride in the facility and increased community engagement



Introduction

North Kesteven District Council's Leisure and Cultural Services successfully bid for funding from Sport England's Inspired Facilities as part of the Sleaford Leisure Centre remodelling project, which was a key component of a broader regeneration plan for Sleaford. The remodelling of an ageing facility along with substantial modernisation and upgrade were required in order to reduce maintenance liabilities and operating costs, increase visitor numbers and improve user satisfaction. Today, the success of the facility is highlighted by a strong sense of pride and increasing community engagement which has led to an increase in overall usage and customer satisfaction levels.

The Project

The District Council considered options to either relocate and build a new facility on the edge of the town, or modernise and upgrade the existing facility. The community's preference was strongly in favour of on-site improvements and a desire for the centre to remain in its existing location, which resulted in a decision to implement a major modernisation programme. The year-long modernisation of the original building involved converting the 140 year old pool to a modern deck-level one and upgrading changing/shower facilities. It provided a new sauna and steam room, larger gym (from 26 stations to 36), new dance studio and spacious entrance area and viewing gallery, whilst incorporating a new toddler woodland splash zone and health suite. Remaining in its original location provided the leisure centre with the additional benefit of receiving free heat and hot water from the Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant (a straw burning power plant), via a sustainable district heating system, the first of its kind in the UK. The Council negotiated a 25-year deal, creating savings on heating alone of £24,000 per year, or £615,000 over the 25 year period. Further sustainable features were incorporated into the facility with more natural lighting and improved insulation.

PREVIOUS FACILITY



NEW FACILITY



Outcomes

The Facility

As part of overall remodelling and modernisation works, the facility now offers improved accessibility for disabled users, including wheelchair access, high specification disabled changing rooms and facilities, including low level lockers and a changing places changing room, which features a 360-degree hoist for the severely disabled.

Sports Participation

The usage figures for the facility demonstrate a strong increase in overall throughput, up 62% (72,000) from 116,000 in the year prior to the modernisation, compared with 188,000 in the first full year after re-opening in October 2013, as shown in the table below. The latest figures from 2014/15 indicate that throughput has continued to increase.

THROUGHPUT	Baseline	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Target	-	140,000	130,000	135,000	140,000	145,000
Actual	116,000	188,000	No data	No data	No data	No data

There have been increases in throughput across the facility in the first full year after re-opening with fitness membership increasing by 86% from 650 to 1,210; water-only membership increasing by 54% from 130 to 200 users; and swim school users have increased by 35% from 430 to 580. Since re-opening in October 2013 the facility has also seen the introduction of a triathlon club and a disability club, which has played a key role increasing participation.

"The atmosphere here is second to none, not to mention the facilities. The pool is absolutely amazing and the changing facilities are immaculate. It is a pleasure to visit three times a week and long may it continue!" Hazel Travers, facility user



Lead Organisation and Partners

North Kesteven District Council was the lead organisation and main funder. Utilising the SCAPE framework (East Midlands regional construction framework), Faithful & Gould were appointed as the project delivery team, who in-turn employed Paul Weston as the architect for the project. The District Council then appointed local contractors RG Carters to carry out the extensive modernisation work. Sleaford Renewable Energy Plant also became a key partner after agreeing a deal, which enables Sleaford Leisure Centre (and four other public buildings) to receive free heat and hot water for 25 years, making the facility far more sustainable. A community wellbeing agreement was secured with the power provided to deliver a range of additional community benefits.

Local Community

Since 1872, the local community have had a strong affiliation with Sleaford Leisure Centre, for many older residents it is an intrinsic part of their lives with some local residents having participated there for over 30 years. There is an even greater sense of pride and community engagement associated with the newly refurbished facility.

There was a comprehensive community consultation process used to inform the project. Along with a 3,000 sample household survey of users and non-users, the District Council also held open meetings for users to discuss the plans and conducted a number of focus groups with users, schools, swimming clubs and the youth council. The District Council used the data collated during consultations to aid the decision making process, most notably to stay on-site and modernise the facility, after finding that the community's preference was strongly in favour of this option. Consultation feedback also enabled the District Council to facilitate participation during the work, for example; after listening to users' concerns around the facility closing for a whole year, the District Council offered support by transferring memberships to another facility operated by 1 Life in North Hykeham. The local community were also kept up-to-date with the progress of the project via bi-monthly newsletters and engagement with clubs/users to show them the work taking place, this process helped to maintain the support from the local community. The local community of Sleaford were very much a part of this project and helped shape the facility from the beginning.

The key points from the user surveys are highlighted below:

- Overall satisfaction with the facility is 100% (79% very satisfied and 21% fairly satisfied).
- Main reasons users visit the facility; to keep fit and healthy/manage weight 72%, and the enjoyment of sport and exercise 69%.
- The majority of users (83%) attended the facility to take part in sport or physical activity.
- On average, users spend just over one hour taking part in physical activity per visit.
- 59% of users have increased the number hours they spend at the facility, with improving health and fitness (86%) the main motivating factor.
- 62% of users stated without facility improvements, the time they spent at the centre would not have increased.
- Over half of users (51%) were likely to have found and attended an alternative facility, if improvements had not taken place.

Key Findings

- The latest KPIs for the centre show that overall satisfaction with the facility for 2014/15 was 98%, and this positive finding is echoed by the 100% overall satisfaction rating from the Inspired Facilities user surveys.
- Overall throughput is up 62% in the first full year after re-opening in October 2013.
- Sport England's Inspired Facilities funding has had a direct impact on increasing participation levels, particularly amongst disabled users.
- The sustainable heating system provides free heat and hot water with savings of £24,000 per year and £615,000 over 25 years.
- There is a strong sense of pride in the facility and increasing community engagement.

Sleaford Leisure Centre has also won several industry and community awards, including:

- Sleaford Civic Trust Award 2014 for building and renovation - a 'bold striking design, pleasant and stimulating environment and a splendid addition to the town'.
- Building Control Awards – Best Public Building Award for Sleaford Leisure Centre.
- The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyor's regional commendation for leisure.
- Chartered Institute of Building's regional sustainability award.
- Green World Ambassador Award.
- Greenbuild Award's winner for non-domestic retrofit.
- Green Apple Award for built environment and architectural heritage.

